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# The Road to Dakar: Water Security for Peace and Development

**W**ater plays a vital role in meeting our needs, preserving our environment, and developing our economies.

**Cooperation around water contributes to peaceful coexistence and the preservation of cordial relations between countries sharing transboundary river basins. In addition, with the combined effects of climate change and population growth leading to the scarcity of water, it is necessary to address the issue of water from the perspective of promoting peace. Water is not a mere sector but a socio-economic connector & a key component of sustainable development and ecosystems are linked with water. Moreover, well-designed plans related to ecosystem restoration should be customized as per contemporary needs, must encompass an integrated approach incorporating 'Transversal' shift interlinking vertical linkages between water-food-energy nexus with horizontal indicators like Health, Education, Agriculture, Gender, etc. And it must be weighed against efficiency, effectiveness, and equity if the world is to realize its 2030 agenda.**



To address the same, the 9th World Water Forum is being organised on the theme of 'Water for peace and development.'

The World Water Forum is organised by the World Water Council (WWC) which co-organizes the Forum every three years. The Council has been co-organising the Forum in partnership with a host country since 1997 and is known as the 'Mecca for water community' and is the world's largest event on the water. By bringing together participants from all levels and areas, including policy-makers, multilateral institutions, academia, civil society, and the private sector, among others, the World Water Forum provides a unique platform where the international water community and the key decision-makers can collaborate and make long-term progress on global water challenges.

Over the years, the number of people participating in the Forum has grown exponentially, from a few hundred to tens of thousands, from both the international community and host countries. It will act as an injection for post-COVID-19 recovery and build scope and space for the water community. It would also be an excellent platform to put across success stories and best practices for cross-sectoral learnings.

## 9th World Water Forum

With Africa taking the lead in hosting big international events like the UNCCD Cop15 at Abidjan, a city on the southern Atlantic coast of Côte d'Ivoire. Similarly, Dakar, the capital of Senegal, serving as a gateway to Africa on the Atlantic Ocean, is hosting the 9th World Water Forum. Dakar is a cosmopolitan crossroads, open to diverse horizons with a long history of hosting world events. The 9<sup>th</sup> Forum will be held from 21-26 March 2022, under the theme: 'Water Security for



*Peace and Development.*' The Forum was postponed by a year due to the global Covid-19 pandemic. The World Water Council and Government of Senegal's intent for

this year's Forum are to organize a Forum that is a catalyst for action to accelerate universal access to water and sanitation, a Forum that is connected and linked to global agendas and commitments relating to SDGs, the Sendai agreement on natural risks and disasters, the Paris Agreement, Africa's 2063 agenda, etc.

It is one of the most important international events that take place and will have participants from every horizon, inter-alia, including political and economic decision-makers, multilateral institutions, UN Agencies, academia, civil society, and the private sector. It will help bring together Heads of State and Government, and major international institutions from around the world to send a historic political message to catalyse action and create partnerships, in particular, to put water at the heart of the international political agenda in the context of building a resilient post-Covid-19 economy and accelerating the achievement of the SDGs. It shall also provide a platform for all



stakeholders (including women's groups, youth, farmers, pastoralists, and fishermen) to articulate their views, and thus contribute to the qualitative transformation in people's daily lives and improving the performance of the productive sectors.

It is an opportunity for the Government of Senegal and the World Water Council to exchange views on the future of water and sanitation, and help WWF emerge as a contextualized, global and community-based Forum anchored on key water challenges in Africa and around the world. It is centred on an integrated preparation based on quality, multi-actor exchanges around a limited number of priorities integrating the previous tools of the processes: thematic, political, regional, citizen.

The "Dakar 2022" Forum will focus on four priorities, namely:

- ÿ Water Security and Sanitation
- ÿ Water for rural development
- ÿ Cooperation
- ÿ Means and Tools including the crucial issues of financing, governance, knowledge management, and innovation; four axes that constitute priorities for Africa, but also for the world as a whole.

## Previous World Water Forums

The 8th World Water Forum was held in the city of Brasilia from 18 to 23 March 2018. The overarching theme of this Forum was "Sharing Water" with the context to share ideas among the civil society, share solutions and good practices, share benefits for water use and, more generally and widely, share actions between countries. The 8th Forum had over 10,600 participants registered, over 100,000 registered visitors, 172 countries were represented including 12 heads of state, 56 government ministers, and over 100 delegations. Some of the major outcomes from the Forum were: The Ministerial Conference resulted in releasing the Declaration entitled "Urgent call for decisive action on water," as a result of the discussions between Ministers and heads of delegations from more

than 100 countries. The document defines priority actions to meet the challenges related to access to water and sanitation. At the Parliamentary Conference, 134 parliamentarians from 20 nations had produced the final document: *The Parliamentary Declaration*, which recognizes the importance of the efforts of parliamentarians to ensure water security, universal access to drinking water, elimination of inequalities, and promotion of sustainable development. A major innovation of this Forum was the participation of the Judiciary, a court-level instance that has the final word on disputes involving water resources and resulted in issuing the "Charter of Brasilia".

The 7th World Water Forum took place from 12 to 17 April 2015, in Daegu and Gyeongbuk, Republic of Korea. Under the theme "Water for Our Future," the Forum aimed to facilitate the implementation of solutions to pressing water-related problems. The Forum brought together over 40,000 visitors from 168 countries which comprised 10 heads of State, 80 government ministers, and 121 official national governments' delegations. Some of the major outcomes from the Forum were: The Ministers adopted the 'Ministerial Declaration,' which was accompanied by a full set of recommendations from the international water community on how best to overcome today's water challenges. The Conference of Parliamentarians for Water resulted in the legislatures issuing a 'Parliamentarian Statement' pledging to promote international cooperation on water challenges. The Forum facilitated a number of political agreements which mark a step forward in international water cooperation. Among the agreements signed, a historic step was taken between the US and Mexico regarding the Colorado River Management. The Forum also saw a

trilateral ministerial meeting between China, Japan, and Korea where ministers pledged to strengthen the core role of water in sustainable development and attract more financial investment to the water sector. The agreement sets a cooperative framework for water resources policy planning to be jointly implemented in the three countries.

## Why on the road to DAKAR?

India has done tremendous work in the field of water and sanitation, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Forum can be a platform for the Indian government, companies, civil societies, agencies to showcase their leadership in water conservation measures, efforts in urban and rural development. These successful models can be used and replicated by other organisations/governments. It is a platform to form partnerships and strengthen India's commitment towards a resilient future and achieving SDGs. This will help in opening new opportunities and access to funds for various projects in the water sector especially the MSME sector as ten thousand start-ups were registered in India and here, they can showcase technology, garner financial support, create partnerships for a resilient and sustainable future. If India were to organise the World Water Forum in the future, it would be an excellent learning ground and an opportunity to understand the scope and space.

This forum is designed to break with the “business as usual” approach because the global development community is in dire need of accelerating action. It will embrace the theme along with its four priorities, will not offer a siloed approach, and will encourage innovation and greater integration while federating communities,



providing a place for expression from all types of stakeholders and a safe space for different entities to have difficult conversations and foster collaboration, will produce more concrete political results to accelerate the implementation at all levels of international agendas and will address challenges in an African context, while retaining its international scope. This year's Forum is expected to have the largest

footprint than the previous Forums and is expected to have more participation from Heads of State/Governments and major international institutions from around the world. As said by the President of the World Water Council, “The raison d'être of the World Water Forum is to bring together key political actors, business leaders, NGOs, donors, and international organizations, gathering experiences and know-how to further contribute and facilitate access to water and sanitation”. The mission is to catalyse collective action for water and achieve concrete progress by bringing together the international community to convince decision-makers that water is a vital political priority for the sustainable and equitable development of the planet.

### About Dr. Arvind Kumar

Dr Arvind Kumar is Governor, World Water Council and President, Founder of India Water Foundation, a non-profit organization and think tank established for generating a heightened public awareness at national level in India and sub-regional level in Asia, regarding water and its impact on human health, economic growth and environmental sustainability, Special Consultative Status with UN-ECOSOC, Observer Status Governing Body of UNEA, Observer Status with UNFCCC, Observer Status with UNCCD, CTCN membership for Southern Asia, member IUCN and member South Asia Network for Sustainable Development (SANS) platform of the SSWA office of UNESCAP.

He is a strategist and key-influencer in development sector with more than 26 years of experience, author, columnist, Water activist, and specializes in ecosystem-based adaptation, water-energy-food nexus, with specific emphasis on inter-linkages between water, environment and SDGs. He has published over 400+ research articles and is a Ph.D. Defense Studies. He jointly edited a publication with SAC Dhaka titled “SAARC Outlook on Water-Energy-Food Nexus in SAARC Region”. Author of recently published book 'United Nations: 75 and Beyond' to commemorate 75 years of service of UN, and “Ecosystem Based Adaptation: Approaches to Sustainable Management of Aquatic Resources” a publication with Elsevier. Upcoming publication “India @75 and Beyond” releasing in April 2022.

He is member of the 'National Wetlands Committee, MoEF&CC, GOI, member Technical Advisory Committee for India's Third National Communication and Biennial Update Reports to UNFCCC, member of the Meghalaya State Water Resources Council and Meghalaya council for Climate Change and Sustainable Development, Member of the General Body of CAPART, Member Working Group on Water Resources Development, Management and Efficient utilization to seek inputs for development agenda for New India @75, NITI Aayog, GOI.

Conferred with the Achievers Award for his exemplary contribution and commitment for protecting environment by India Eye IHRO in collaboration with UNIC for India & Bhutan on the occasion of World Environment Day 2017 in New Delhi, Water Digest Water Awards “Water Warriors - United for Water!” 2017-18 under the Category “BEST WATER NGO - WATER EDUCATION”.